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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO BOLIVIA'S NEW COCA STRATEGY

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Krishna Urs
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) On December 20, the DCM met with European Union chief of mission Ambassador Andrew Standley and United Nations representative Jose Manuel Martinez Morales to discuss reactions to the GOB's new coca strategy which was announced at a December 18 ceremony in the Chapare. Poloff also attended as notetaker. The GOB's plan includes an increase of 8,000 hectares of coca cultivation above the 12,000 currently allowed under Bolivian law. The United Nations and European Union representatives admitted that their respective organizations lacked a clearly defined response to the GOB's announced plan. Ambassador Standley

said that EU member countries were all concerned with the GOB's plan and that they preferred a discreet response rather than a public rebuke. The DCM explained that Bolivian anti-narcotics review in March rested on a number of factors but that the GOB's 2007 strategy, if implemented, could complicate the review. The DCM repeatedly stressed the need for the international community to have a united and clear response to the GOB's new plan; his peers concurred and discussed convening a mini-Dublin group meeting in early January 2007.
End Summary.

Background

¶2. (C) At a December 18 ceremony in the Chapare President Morales unveiled the GOB's 2007 counter narcotics strategy. The cornerstone of the strategy is the GOB's "commitment to containing" coca cultivation at 20,000 hectares, an increase from the 12,000 allowed under Bolivian law. Morales also committed to improving drug consumption prevention programs, strengthening interdiction, promoting the industrialization of coca products, and changing international conventions to decriminalize coca leaf.

United Nations & European Union Position

¶3. (C) The United Nations and European Union representatives admitted that their respective organizations lacked a clearly defined response to the GOB's announced plan. Mr. Martinez opened with the point, and all parties agreed, that the GOB's plan was a violation of both international conventions (1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs) and Bolivia's own narcotics law (known as law 1008). Ambassador Standley said that EU member countries were all concerned with the GOB's plan and that they preferred a discreet response rather than a public rebuke. Standley stated his personal opinion that the GOB will never find widespread legal (industrial) uses for Bolivia's excess coca. Mr. Standley noted that the GOB continues to stall EU efforts to perform a study on the size of Bolivia's licit coca market. He mentioned that he recently met with Pablo Solon, Bolivia's Ambassador at large for integration and trade issues, who assured him the GOB was still interested in the study and that it would move forward on it in January. Standley was most interested in hearing how the United States was planning to respond to the GOB's plan and how it would impact Bolivia's narcotics certification in March 2007.

DCM Urs' Remarks

¶4. (C) The DCM explained that Embassy La Paz had been warned that the GOB was planning a change in licit coca growing targets and that the Ambassador had expressed the USG's concern over the GOB's plan prior to its announcement. The DCM concurred that strong public denunciations of the GOB's plan would be counter-productive. The DCM explained that the USG was prepared to sign its annual letter of agreement with the GOB on counter narcotics that same day and would not abandon its anti-drug efforts at this time. However, he emphasized that USG officials will state both privately and publicly that the GOB's new strategy is a step backwards and seems to violate international commitments.

¶5. (C) The DCM explained that White House review of Bolivian counter-narcotic efforts in March rested on a number of factors but that the GOB's 2007 strategy if implemented would seriously complicate the review. He explained that the USG position would push for Bolivia to move forward on the EU's proposed coca study. In response to this potential requirement, Mr. Martinez observed,

with a hint of sarcasm, that the GOB was likely to announce its plan to begin the study on February 28, 2007.

¶6. (C) The DCM repeatedly stressed the need for the international community to have a united and clear response to the GOB's new plan. The DCM suggested that a mini-Dublin group meeting be convened to develop a common position. Ambassador Standley and Mr. Martinez concurred with the DCM's suggestions, and the three agreed that January 8 or 9 would be a suitable date for the meeting.
GOLDBERG